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Theater, YMCA Fundraisers near goals

As year ends, campaigns try to beat deadlines

By James Russell, jrussell@record-eagle.com

TRAVERSE CITY – Two fundraising campaigns are inching toward the finish line, and last-minute donations could make for a very merry New Year's celebration at one local organization.

Michael Moore is expected to announce today that the Traverse City Film Festival met its \$500,000 fundraising goal for the State Theatre, with three days to spare. The money will support the festival's community fund, which provides 25-cent matinees and free movies, and help repair the State's aging façade.

"It's given people a chance to rally around the theater, and it's been so heartwarming," said Deb Lake, executive director of the film festival, which owns the theater.

Meanwhile, the Grand Traverse Bay YMCA is still looking for help before Jan. 1; it needs \$1.08 million to make an end-of-the-year goal that could net an additional \$2 million toward a new facility on Silver Lake Road.

An anonymous donor challenged the Y in October to raise the remaining \$4 million of its \$12 million capital campaign to receive the money.

"We've almost raised \$3 million so far, so we're pretty optimistic that it may happen," said Dave Eitland, campaign director for the New YMCA Campaign.

The YMCA is raising money for a new 104,000-square-foot facility in Garfield Township to include indoor tennis courts, four pools in a new aquatic center, and up to seven fitness centers.

Eitland said he's overwhelmed by the community's generosity over the past two months – since the match started, donors have contributed \$2.92 million.

“We’ve been getting gifts of \$5, and gifts of \$200,000,” he said. “People are at the point where they know that it’s going to get built, and they’re finally engaging and willing to invest in it.”

The challenge pledge spurred several previous donors to up their contributions.

The Oleson Foundation pledged \$300,000 over two years on top of the \$450,000 it already donated over three years.

“This last grant was really intended to revitalize the campaign and jump-start commitments to reach the match,” said Kathy Huschke, Oleson Foundation’s executive director. “It’s important to have things to do for our kids and families together. There are lot of wonderful outside recreational activities, but there are some months when we can’t get out there. The Olesons believe in the health and wellness of our youth and families.”

If the YMCA makes its goal, construction could begin in the spring.

The State Theatre also turned toward the community for help at the end of 2011. In November, the nonprofit film festival kicked off the public portion of a fundraising campaign to fill budget holes and upgrade its aging façade.

The festival, which owns the theater, hoped to raise \$500,000 by the end of the year in a campaign it dubbed “Another Hundred Years.”

Lake said large grants from groups like Rotary Charities and Consumers Energy as well as smaller, individual donations contributed to a successful effort.

“We’ve had a ton of people who have given what they can: \$10, \$50, \$250,” Lake said. “It’s been an opportunity for the community to think about what State means to them...It’s been really great for us to get everyone’s thoughts about the theater.”

For more information about Grand Traverse Bay YMCA’s capital campaign, or to donate, contact the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation at 935-4066 or see www.4good4ever.org.

For the latest on the film festival's "Another Hundred Years" campaign, visit www.anotherhundredyears.org.